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THE PHANTOM™ ANNUAL

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Five Days of the Dragon

THE PHANTOM ANNUAL

"Five Days of the Dragon"

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FROM THE CHRONICLES OF THE 3RD PHANTOM
October, 1667.
An emperor of ancient China gathered the magicians, alchemists and wise men of his court and commanded them to tame a great dragon that threatened his kingdom.
This they did, trapping the dragon in a statue of precious jade, which was then split into five pieces and presented to the emperor.
The dragon's awesome might, they told him, could be unleashed only when the five pieces were joined.
The Emperor was well pleased, knowing he now had a great and terrible weapon at his disposal.

The Emperor unleashed the dragon's power when faced with invading hordes from the north, or barbarians from the south.

None could stand against him, and he lived to see his dotage.

Upon his deathbed, the Emperor gave each of his five sons one piece of the dragon, so that its power could be summoned only by their unanimous agreement.

In the intervening centuries, the five pieces were stolen or lost, passing through the hands of scoundrels as well as saints...

...ultimately scattered to the four corners of the Earth, never to be seen again.

Or so the story goes.

Word has reached me that a supposed piece of this dragon was found amongst a treasure discovered by Dutch traders in Sumatra.
The riches were placed upon a ship making the return voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, bound for Europe.
But the treasure never reached its destination.
The ship was intercepted and plundered by the vile pirates of the Singh Brotherhood.
The crew, to a man, was put to the sword, and the treasure carried off.
The Singh are the sworn enemies of my father, and my father's father before him.

More, it is their evil that was responsible for creating The Ghost Who Walks.
THE PHANTOM.

THE MUCH STORIED PHANTOM...
...NOTHING MORE THAN A COMMON THIEF? SHOCKING.
I IMAGINE COMMON THIEVERY IS A SUBJECT YOU'RE INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH, KATAR SINGH.
THEN IT'S UNCOMMON THIEVERY THAT HAS ROUSED YOU FROM YOUR JUNGLE HOME, PHANTOM?
DO YOU SEEK SOMETHING SPECIAL?
SOMETHING LIKE THIS, PERHAPS?
GIVE IT TO ME NOW
AND YOU'LL SPARE YOUR CREW A MULTITUDE OF BROKEN BONES.
SUCH CHARITY YOU OFFER ME.

KILL HIM.
PAKOW
UHFF!
I'LL SPLIT YOU FROM GULLET TO GIZZARD MYSELF!
NNGH!
HOLD HIM!

OWF!
EVEN IF THE ARTIFACT'S POWER IS MERE LEGEND...
I WON'T ALLOW A VILLAIN LIKE YOU TO POSSESS IT!
NO, PHANTOM, NOW THAT I HAVE THIS, I'LL NOT REST UNTIL THE OTHER FOUR PIECES ARE MINE!
UNTIL THE POWER OF THE DRAGON IS MINE!
THEN WILL THE KINGS OF THE WORLD BOW DOWN BEFORE THE SINGH!
NOT IN MY LIFETIME.
YOU SEEK TO ESCAPE, PHANTOM?
PERHAPS MEN SHOULD CALL YOU THE GHOST WHO FLEES!

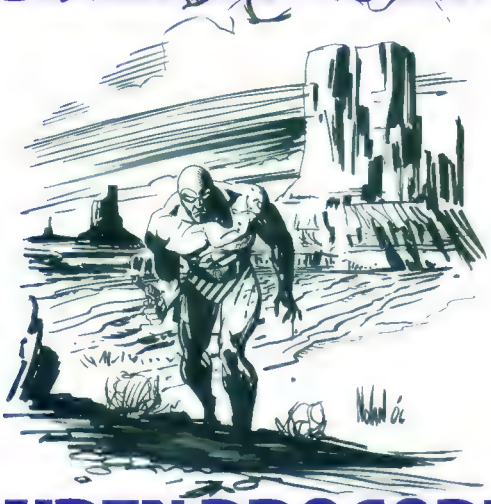
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE JUST YET...
...AND NEITHER ARE YOU.
THEN YOU'VE TRAPPED YOURSELF TO DIE SPITTED ON MY—
AHH?!
DEATH AND I ARE OLD FRIENDS.
I HAVE NO FEAR OF IT.
I'M NOT ACCUSTOMED TO KILLING, BUT IN THIS CASE...
FLICK
...I WILL SEPARATE YOU FROM YOUR HEAD.
DON'T WORRY, I'LL KEEP IT IN A SAFE PLACE.

GOOD LUCK WITH THE FIRE.
Do I truly believe a mere statue can be a vehicle for mystical power?
I don't know.
UFF!
OOF!
But I've seen too many strange and wondrous things here in Bangalla, and beyond, to take that chance.

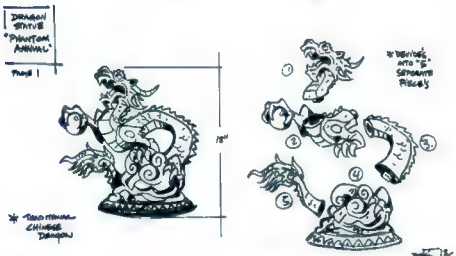
Such a thing must not fall into the hands of those who would use it for ill purposes.
I must dedicate myself to finding those pieces that remain...
SWEET!
GOOD BOY, HERO.
SOMETHING NEW FOR THE TREASURE ROOM.
...no matter how long it might take.

The
Punisher

GRAHAM NOLAN



RUBEN PROCOPIO



FROM THE CHRONICLES OF THE 11TH PHANTOM
May, 1782.
In Wallabout Bay, the Redcoats established a prison that rivaled any in history for sheer misery and cruelty.
More people died here than General Washington lost on the battlefields of that bloody revolution.
Those who devised this unholy place deserved to be hung, but they weren't the only men in King George's navy who'd made a deal with the Devil...
CAPTAIN CORCORAN. I TAKE IT THIS IS YOUR SHIP'S SURGEON... DOCTOR SINGER, WAS IT?
THE NAME... IS SINGH.
YESSIR. SORRY, SIR.
THE MAN YOU CAME FOR IS DOWN BELOW...

PARDON THE SMELL...
-:HAKK:-

MUST BE FROM INDIA. KEEPS NATTERING ON ABOUT "BENGAL" OR SOMESUCH.
....THE GHOST ...THE GHOST...

BANGALLA.
NOW LEAVE US.

〈 DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM? 〉
〈 ...SINGH... BROTHERHOOD... 〉
〈 ...DO YOUR WORST... I WILL NEVER TELL... 〉
〈 YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SAY A THING, YOU CRETIN. I ALREADY KNOW ALL I NEED TO KNOW... 〉

〈 THE ITEM WAS NEVER FOUND ABOARD YOUR SHIP. IT IS FAR TOO PRECIOUS TO TOSS OVERBOARD.... 〉
〈 ...SO THAT LEAVES ONLY ONE PLACE YOU COULD HIDE IT. 〉
MEANIN' NO DISRESPECT, SIR, BUT DOES THAT WOG ALWAYS ACT LIKE HE'S LORD O' THE ADMIRALTY?
BELAY THAT TALK, SON. IF YOU'D SAILED THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AS I DID, YOU'D KNOW BETTER THAN TO INSULT A MAN NAMED SINGH.
WHAT DID THAT WRETCH SAY ABOUT A GHOST?
DUNNO, SIR. HE DOES IT EVERY DAY. SOMETHIN' 'BOUT "THE GHOST THAT TALKS."
CORRECTION...
SLAM

...IT'S THE GHOST WHO WALKS.
I had learned of Captain Corcoran's fealty to my enemies the hard way.
Five years had it been since his man-o-war backed the Singh invasion of Mogadishu, where I failed to stop them.
Now they were after a weapon of far greater power than a ship of the line...

...and this time, I swore to my ancestors, I would not fail.
WHUMP
A BIT FAR FROM HOME, AREN'T YOU, PHANTOM?
NEXT TIME I SEE YOUR "BROTHERS," I SHALL TELL THEM WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT YOU WERE.
ARUNE SINGH.
YOU'LL NOT SAY A THING ONCE I CUT OUT YOUR TONGUE!
My wife left me when I returned from Mogadishu. She said I'd grown more devoted to vengeance than to our family.
Without conjugal distraction, I rededicated myself to my sacred mission and sought battle like no Phantom before me...

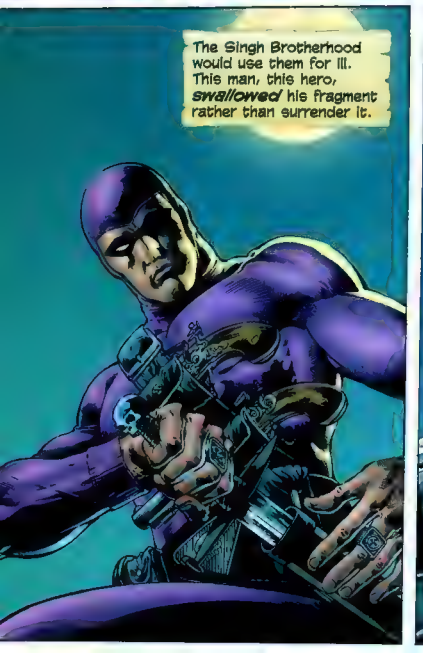
...never stopping to wonder if I had plunged into an abyss of my own making.
WAIT—!
〈 DO YOU KNOW ME? 〉
〈 YES... GUARDIAN OF BANGALLA... 〉
LET ME OUT!
BANG BANG
〈 ...TRIED TO ...BRING IT TO YOU... 〉
〈 SAVE YOUR STRENGTH. WE ARE NOT FREE YET. 〉
Knowing that escape was unlikely without something to divert the guards, I exhorted the other prisoners to rise against their captors.
They stared at me, uncomprehending, as though I were yet another figment of their perpetual nightmare...

But when I shot over the heads of the lobsterback guards, the thunderclap of my Dragoon pistol broke the spell.
Suddenly, they remembered that they were fighting a war for independence, and that freedom is often paid for in blood.
Too long had they languished in the H.M.S. Jersey, that most infamous of the "horrible hulks" — ships refurbished as floating jails and anchored within tantalizing sight of Manhattan and Brooklyn.
A dozen prisoners a day died of hunger and disease aboard "Hell Afloat." Now at least they could fight and die like men.
Or so I told myself as they covered my escape.

But if I thought the ship itself horrific, the waters around it were worse yet.
All those dead men were not afforded the dignity of a proper burial. They were dumped unceremoniously overboard...
...until the waters of Brooklyn's Wallabout Bay were a murderous stew the likes of which even Dante could never imagine.
〈 ...FORGIVE ME, BWANA... 〉

〈 ...I FOUND THE FRAGMENT... IT LOOKED JUST AS YOU SAID IT WOULD... 〉
〈 ...MY SHIP WAS TAKEN AS I TRIED TO BRING IT HOME... 〉
〈 ...BUT I KEPT IT SAFE... I KEPT IT... 〉

Death claimed him before he could finish, but I knew what must be done.
This man had been a chieftain of Bangalla. My father sent him and others to search the world for four lost items of unspeakable power.

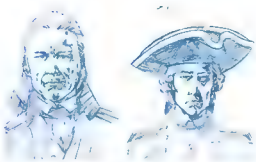

The Singh Brotherhood would use them for ill. This man, this hero, *swallowed* his fragment rather than surrender it.

Once again, the abyss yawned, beckoning me still deeper into darkness. And once again, I answered the challenge.

In any case, the prize was recovered, the mission accomplished.
I had pushed past every barrier set before me and snatched victory from my enemies.
But I had no sense of triumph. Joy had long since fled my heart.
I leave this chronicle as a *warning* to those who carry on the mantle of the Phantom.
Do not lose yourself in our mission. Do not turn your back on hearth and home...on the things that keep us human.
Lest, like me, you should lose your soul along the way, and be reduced to... a ghost who walks.

The
Punisher

ALLAN GOLDMAN



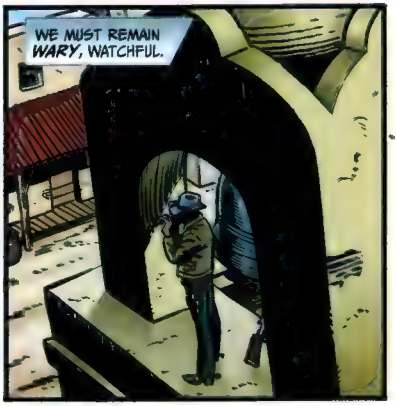
FROM THE CHRONICLES OF THE 16TH PHANTOM
There were seven when they set out across the Chihuahua wastes.
The desert made them turn on one another for minor betrayals or suspicions.
A man made to test a suspect waterhole at gunpoint.
Another left to die with his hobbled mount.
That left only the four hardest men when the trail ended at San Bernardo.

MAKE SURE IT'S FULL, BOY.
THIRSTY TRIP FROM NOGALES.
SI, SENOR.
KILLIN'S THIRSTY WORK TOO.
YOU SAY YOU HAVE LIVED HERE ALL YOUR LIFE.
YET YOU CLAIM IGNORANCE IN THE LIGHT OF MY QUESTIONS.
WE ARE A POOR VILLAGE. THERE IS NO TREASURE HERE.
I BEG YOUR MERCY FOR MY FLOCK IF NOT FOR ME, SENOR.

AND THE GHOST WHO WALKS?
DO YOU KNOW OF HIM?
HAS HE BEEN HERE?

: snort :
GHOST WHO WALKS.

HE IS REAL, MY FRIEND.
AND CLOSE BEHIND ME WHEN I LEFT DENVER.


WE MUST REMAIN WARY, WATCHFUL.

HUH?

WE WILL SEARCH THIS CHURCH, HOLY MAN, AND IF WE HAVE NOT FOUND WHAT I SEEK--
--WE WILL MURDER ONE OF YOUR PEONS FOR EVERY HOUR I MUST WAIT FOR YOU TO SURRENDER IT.
BLONG...BLONG...BLONG...BLONG...
IS HE DEAD?
IT'S RAFE!
JUDAS PALOMINA..
HAVE A GUTLOAD OF DOUBLE-OUGHT!
BOOM
BOOM
NO! DON'T---

UNNH!
HE IS HERE!
HE HAS FOLLOWED ME!
FROM RANGOON TO MACAO TO SAN FRANCISCO AND TO HERE!
unnh...
HE WILL NOT WIN AGAIN AGAINST THE SINGH BROTHERHOOD!
HE HAS COME ALL THIS WAY TO DIE!
WE WILL SEE IF THE GHOST IS WILLING TO TRADE----
----A HOLY MAN FOR A HANDFUL OF JADE!

RAFE, TAYLOR--- HE IS HERE SOMEWHERE.
WATCHING--- WAITING---
SHOW YOURSELF!
SHOW YOURSELF OR THE PRIEST DIES!
BOSS, IS THAT THE HOMBRE YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR?
YOU!

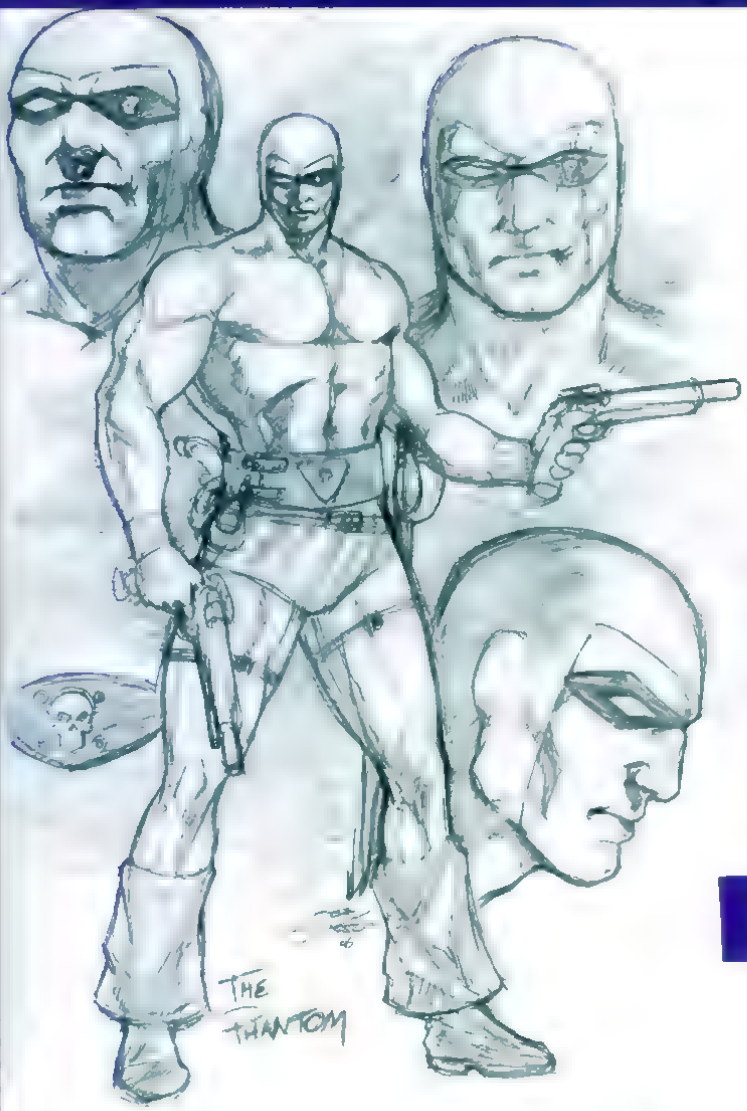
SADDLE UP AND RIDE AWAY, GHUTAR.
IT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL LEAVE HERE ALIVE.
HE LIES!
THE GHOST DOES NOT SHOOT TO KILL!
BLAM
BLAM
SPING
UH!
SPANG
P-TING

BLAM
VEEEEEOW
YOUR FLOCK IS SAFE NOW, PADRE.
BLESS YOU. BLESS YOU, MY SON.
LONG WAY TO COME FOR NOTHING, GHUTAR.
I HAVE MORE RELIABLE INFORMATION THAN YOU.
YOU WILL NEVER FIND IT IF I COULD NOT.

GENEROSITY SERVED *ME* BETTER THAN THREATS SERVED *YOU*.
THAT JUG HAS BEEN HERE AS LONG AS THIS CHURCH HAS *STOOD*.
LONGER THAN *THAT*.
THIS AMPHORA WAS A GIFT TO THE *MIXTECS* FROM A TRAVELER LONG AGO.
EVEN *THEY* HAD NO IDEA OF ITS TRUE NATURE.
A HUMBLE WATER JUG...
YOU MAY *HOLD* THESE MEN FOR WHATEVER JUSTICE THAT AWAITS THEM.
HAH!
YOU HAVE NOT *WON*, GHOST WHO WALKS.
A HANDFUL OF *GOLD* AND THE *RURALES* OR *FEDERALES* WILL FREE US.
THEN I WILL BE ON YOUR TRAIL ONCE *MORE*.

THE JUSTICE COMING FOR YOU CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF WITH COINS.
THIS BOY IS NAMED VICTORIO AND HE WAS SENT TO THE MISSION TO STUDY--
"--BY HIS FATHER, AN APACHE WAR CHIEF WHO IS EVEN NOW RIDING TO VISIT HIS SON."
HE WILL KILL ME!
YOU CAN EXPLAIN TO HIM WHY YOU STRUCK HIS CHILD.
THAT IS THE BEST YOU CAN HOPE FOR.
VAYA CON DIOS!
AND YOU AS WELL, MI AMIGOS!
PADRE, WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?
WE MAY NEVER KNOW, MY SON.
WE MAY NEVER TRULY KNOW.

The
Punisher

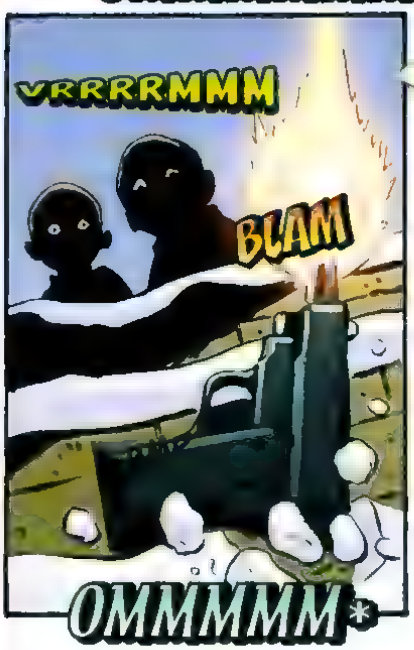


JOE PRADO

〈 MASTER? 〉
〈 WE WILL HAVE VISITORS SOON! 〉
OMMMMMMM...

〈 BUT IT IS TOO SOON FOR THE DELIVERY OF SUPPLIES FROM THE VILLAGE, IS IT NOT? 〉
〈 TODAY IS A SPECIAL DAY, LHAO. 〉
〈 TODAY WE FULFILL A PROPHECY. 〉
OMMMMMMM...

〈 TODAY WE REALIZE A VISION FORETOLD MANY YEARS AGO. A VISION OF HOPE. OR OF DOOM. 〉
〈 HOPE OR DOOM, MASTER? HOW WILL WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHICH IT WILL BE? 〉
OMMMMMMM...


VRRRRMMM
BLAM
OMMMMM*

FROM THE CHRONICLES OF THE 19TH PHANTOM
NOVEMBER, 1933
VRRRRRRRRRR

MAYDAY! MAYDAY! WE'RE GOING DOWN!
WATCH WHERE YER SHOOTIN'!
I GOT 'IM! I GOT 'IM!
POW POW POW!
RATATATATATAT
KRAK
I tracked three members of the Singh Brotherhood to an airfield in Nepal, where they chartered a Fokkar Tri-motor cargo plane.
I snuck onboard, and hid behind some crates, hoping they would lead me to the third piece of The Dragon...
But they found me.
HAW! YA MISSED ME!
NO—
WHOOP!
I DIDN'T.
WHOOOOAAAAA
I'M DONE HERE! BUT HE CAN'T HANG ON MUCH LONGER!
HE DONE GOOD SO FAR!
...GIMME ANUDDER MAGAZINE!
RATATATATATAT KLIK KLIK KLIK
YEAH, YEAH, OKAY—
HOLD DIS!
HOLD WHAT?
YANK
HOLY —!
WOULDJA LOOK AT DAT!

GET ME ANUDDER CLIP! I NEED MORE BULLETS!
UH...

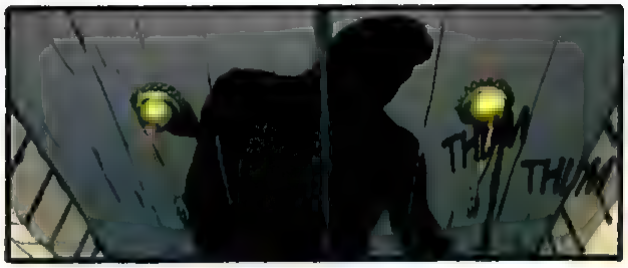
SEE YA!
'EY YA RUMMY!

HYUHK!
YOU AIN'T GOIN' NO-WHERES WIDDOUT ME!

The pilot was able to veer the plane away from the monastery and keep it from crashing. But it wouldn't stay aloft for long.
I didn't see him escape the plane. I couldn't assume he had a parachute. So I crawled along the hull of the burning aircraft, trying to reach the doorway...

I guess I shouldn't have worried.

HEY, YOU MADE IT!
I THOUGHT THOSE GUYS KILLED YOU!
FLOOHM!
GUESS I'LL HAVE TO FINISH THE JOB!
KRAK
KRAK KRAK
BA-BOOM
WHUMP

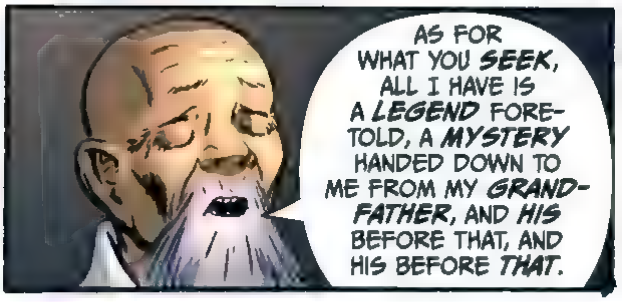

THUD
THUD

PRIEST!
AH! WELCOME, HONORED GUEST!

I AM GRATEFUL THAT YOU HAVE SURVIVED YOUR... HARROWING EXPERIENCE.
AS YOU CAN SEE, WE HAVE GATHERED TO CELEBRATE YOUR ARRIVAL.
WHERE IS IT, OLD MAN?

"IT?"
DON'T TOY WITH ME! YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
THE BROTHERHOOD OF SINGH IS KNOWN EVEN TO US.
THEN YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT!
WHERE IS THE THIRD PIECE? TELL ME, OR ELSE!

THERE IS MUCH THAT I KNOW, TRUE, O SINGH.
ALAS, THERE IS MUCH I DO NOT.


AS FOR WHAT YOU SEEK, ALL I HAVE IS A LEGEND FORETOLD, A MYSTERY HANDED DOWN TO ME FROM MY GRANDFATHER, AND HIS BEFORE THAT, AND HIS BEFORE THAT.

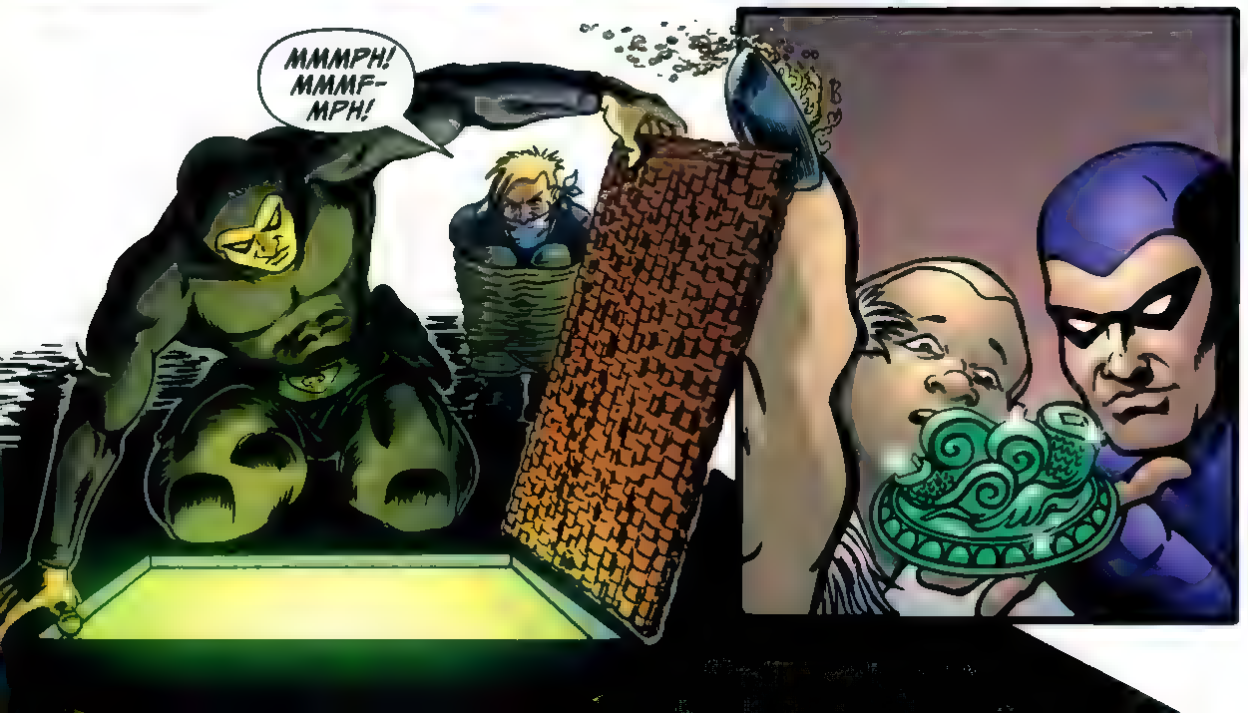
"HE SHALL STAND BEFORE YOU, A MAN OF THE MODERN WORLD. THE OBJECT HE SEEKS WILL OBVIOUSLY BE BENEATH A MAN OF HIS BEARING.
"WILL HE HUMBLE HIMSELF TO FIND IT?"
I WARNED YOU NOT TO TOY WITH ME, OLD MAN! WOULD YOU DIE FOR YOUR BELIEFS?
WOULD YOU?
PERHAPS HE WILL KNOW.
WHERE IS THE JADE DRAGON?
WHO!?
I THINK HE MEANS ME...
MASTER!

THE PHANTOM!
WHY WON'T YOU DIE?
DIDN'T YOU HEAR? I'M IMMORTAL.
NOW, LET THE MONK GO, SINGH. IT'S OVER.
YOUR CODE AGAINST KILLING IS WELL KNOWN TO THE BROTHERHOOD OF SINGH! AND, AS I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE, WE HAVE NO SUCH CODE!
I THINK NOT, PHANTOM! IN FACT, I THINK I'M HOLDING ALL THE CARDS!
NOW, PUT THE GUN DOWN OR THE MONK DIES!!
SHUT UP!
PAF
TAKE IT EASY. DON'T HURT HIM...
PLEASE, THERE IS NO NEED—
THIS PLACE IS LOUSY WITH PRIESTS! WHAT'S ONE LESS, GIVE OR TAKE? BUT DON'T WORRY. ALL I WANT IS THE DRAGON...
THE DRAGON, AND YOUR DEATH!
K-RUM
NO!
PHANTOM!
K-RAK

AAAAAIEE!
THUD
THAD
ARGH!
UNH!
WHAMMO
URK!

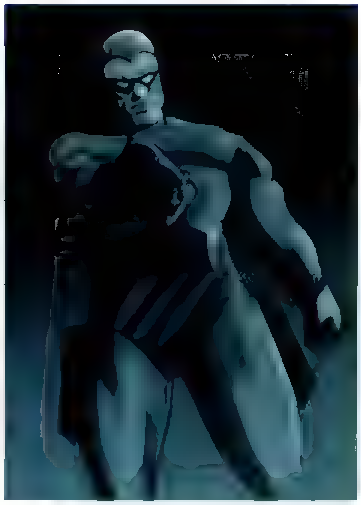
THANK YOU, LHAO, FOR RESCUING MY GUN. I THOUGHT I'D LOST IT IN SOME SNOW DRIFT.
OF COURSE, PHANTOM. THANK YOU FOR RESCUING MY MASTER!
AND NOW, HONORED GUEST, I EXPECT YOU WISH TO RETRIEVE THAT WHICH HAS CAUSED SO MUCH... TURMOIL?
YOU STAND NOW WHERE THE OTHER MAN STOOD.
WILL YOU FARE ANY BETTER THAN HE?

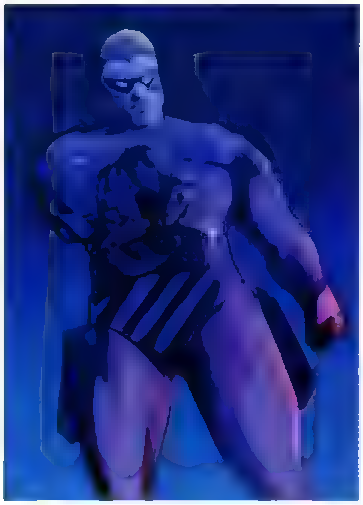
"HE SHALL STAND BEFORE YOU, A MAN OF THE MODERN WORLD. THE OBJECT HE SEEKS WILL OBVIOUSLY BE BENEATH A MAN OF HIS BEARING.
"WILL HE HUMBLE HIMSELF TO FIND IT?"
THE JADE DRAGON, WHEN COMPLETE, IS SAID TO BE POWERFUL, TRUE; THAT IS A HUMBLING THOUGHT.
SO, WHY WOULD I THINK IT BENEATH ME...?
AH! YES...


MMMPH! MMMF- MPH!

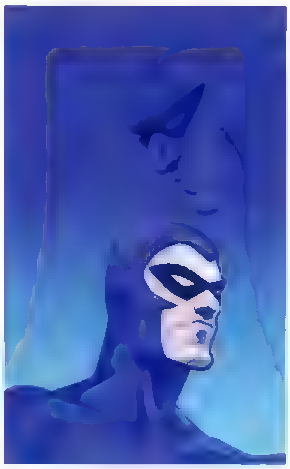
AS YOU CAN SEE, THE SHERPAS HAVE RESCUED THE OTHER MEN FROM THE AIRPLANE.
THEY WILL REMAIN OUR GUESTS FOR A TIME.
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW, WITH YOUR PRIZE?
I'LL BRING IT WITH ME, TO JOIN ITS MATES, KEEP THEM HIDDEN. AND SAFE.
THE BROTHERHOOD OF SINGH WILL NOT REST UNTIL THEY HAVE THE DRAGON.
THEY COVET ITS AWESOME POWER.
LET THEM COME. I'VE SWORN AN OATH TO PROTECT THE DRAGON— AND ITS POWER— FROM THE ABUSE OF EVIL MEN. THE SINGH WILL FAIL.
KALI SHU. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.
FAREWELL, MY FRIEND. KALI PAI.
LUCKY FOR ME YOU HAPPENED ALONG, MY FRIEND.
I WASN'T SURE HOW I WAS GOING TO GET DOWN TO THE VILLAGE! MANY THANKS.
YOU ARE WELCOME, OF COURSE.
BUT WE DIDN'T "HAPPEN ALONG", AS YOU SAY.
THE LAMA SENT FOR US A WEEK AGO TO ACCOMPANY "A MAN IN A MASK" BACK TO THE VILLAGE!
BUT, HOW DID HE KNOW--?

The
Punisher





JUAN FERREYRA



FROM THE CHRONICLES OF THE 21ST PHANTOM
Present day. Off the coast of Alexandria, Egypt.
Jin, an Asian antiquities dealer, contacted me last week, explaining she'd found the fifth piece of the Dragon.
In my delight at this news, I quickly granted her request to see the remaining four pieces in exchange for the fifth.
She asked that I meet her at Golden Plaza Hotel in downtown Alexandria *tomorrow* at sundown.
PHANTOM!
However, due to the gravity of this mission, I felt it best to arrange a rendezvous...
...on *my terms*.
GREETINGS, MS. ZHONGYI. IT'S A *LOVELY NIGHT* FOR A CRUISE, DON'T YOU THINK?
THE TWINKLING STARS PALE ONLY IN COMPARISON TO YOUR BEAUTY.
I TRUST YOU HAVE THE *FIFTH PIECE*.

SHOW ME THE OTHER FOUR PIECES!
LONG HAVE I DREAMT OF THE DAY WHEN MY EYES MIGHT FALL UPON THEIR MAGNIFICENCE!
I'VE YET TO MEET A WOMAN WHO ISN'T FASCINATED BY PRECIOUS STONES.
LET ME SEE THE FIFTH PIECE.
CAREFUL, WE DARE NOT PUT THEM TOGETHER.
BUT I WILL DARE, GHOST WHO WALKS...

IF YOU WANT TO VANQUISH YOUR ENEMIES, IT'S BEST TO KNOW THEIR WEAKNESSES, YOURS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN BEAUTIFUL WOMEN, PHANTOM.
IT'S FINALLY MINE. AFTER ALL THESE CENTURIES, THE DRAGON IS FINALLY MINE. AND WHAT BETTER WAY TO END THIS CHASE THAN AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MAN WHO CANNOT DIE.
HOW FITTING THAT YOU'LL WITNESS MY VICTORY, FIRST HAND.
OH, SPARE ME THE SPEECHES, TEMUR...
SILENCE! YOU HAVE WATERED DOWN THE STRENGTH OF THE SINGH NAME FOR TOO LONG, PHANTOM. I'D SAY IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU MET YOUR END.
YAKUZA, MAFIA, AL QUEADA, TRIAD... THEY ARE ALL WEAK COMPARED TO THE SINGH AND TONIGHT, WE WILL SHOW THE WORLD!
TONIGHT! WE WIPE ALEXANDRIA FROM THE MAP, AND WITH IT, OUR ENEMIES, WHO WOULD MEDDLE IN SINGH AFFAIRS.
TONIGHT THE WORLD TREMBLES AT THE NAME...

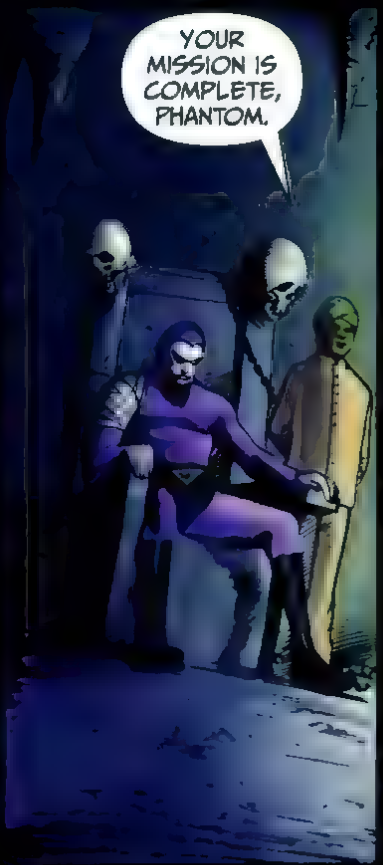
KRA-KA-TADOOOOM!
...SINGH!
SOMETHING TELLS ME WE'RE IN FOR SOME FOUL WEATHER.
TEMUR! WHERE IS THE DRAGON?
QUIET WOMAN! THE DRAGON IS COMING! DON'T YOU FEEL HIS BREATH?!
DRAGON! TAKE DOWN MY ENEMIES IN ALEXANDRIA, I, TEMUR SINGH COMMAND IT!
KILL HIM!
THWACK
MIND YOUR MANNERS.

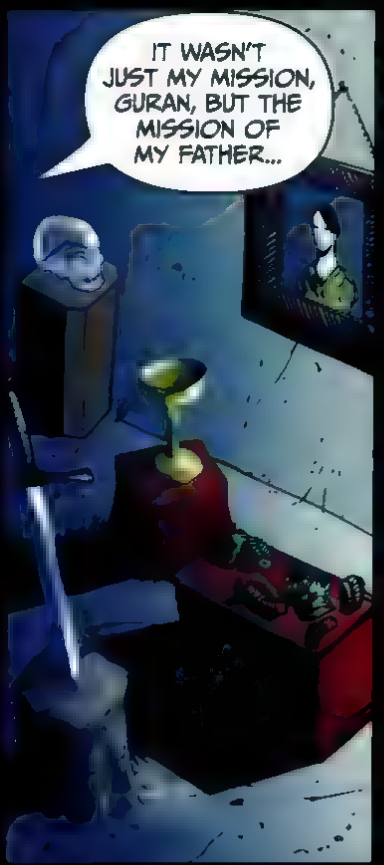
WHAM
DRAGON! I, TEMUR SINGH, AM YOUR MASTER NOW! DESTROY MY ENEMIES!
NOT SO FAST, PURPLE MAN.
HANDS OFF, ROUGHNECK!
CRACK
HEAR ME, O' MIGHTY DRAGON! COME FORTH AND BRING MY ENEMIES TO THEIR...

...KNEE-EYYYSS!
IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR WOULD-BE PET ISN'T LISTENING TO YOU, TEMUR.
THE LEGENDS FORETOLD!
I AM THE DRAGON MASTER! THE DRAGON WILL DO AS I SAY!
I TAKE IT YOU SKIPPED THE PART OF THE LEGEND THAT REFERS TO THE DRAGON MASTER BEING FROM "PURE BLOOD"?
IF I CAN'T HAVE THE DRAGON, AT LEAST I CAN HAVE THIS...
KA-POW

YOUR DAYS OF MEDDLING IN SINGH BROTHERHOOD BUSINESS ARE OVER, PHANTOM!
I-
KRA-KA-FWA-BOOM!
KA-DA-BOOM!

* Translated from Egyptian, Ghost Who Edits.





... and his fathers before him.

Every once in a while one of my friends will come to me with what sounds like a great idea. Said friend will pitch this idea, with excitement in their voice, dilated pupils, flaring nostrils and rosy cheeks. The idea will be full of promise, carrying that spark of adrenalin that fires up the imagination engines and has me, them and often many others charging full speed ahead before we really stop and take stock in exactly what we're getting ourselves into…

If I ever do take a moment to examine the potential obstacles, sizing each one up and estimating just what it will take to overcome it, I often find my zeal for the idea waning.

If you take your eyes off the goal, it's amazing how fast your drive to get there dissipates.

From another point of view, if your vision isn't locked on the prize from the start, the aforementioned friend must not have done a very good job selling you on the idea.

Lucky for you, this time the friend was Ron Marz and he is rather adept at selling ideas.

Rewind about a year and as I'm sitting at my computer, working diligently on a Phantom script for the regular series, Ron buzzes me and says, "Hey, I have an itch to write a Phantom story. How about we put together a Phantom annual with several different creative teams?"

Sure, it sounded like a lot of fun at the time. So have many other things I've done in the past that ended up with an unscheduled trip to the Emergency Room.

If I'd looked inside my toolbox that day, I'd have seen it was full of monkey wrenches just waiting to get tossed into our plan. Right then and there, I'd have told him to call me back when he had a better idea.

Once again, luckily for you, I didn't and neither did Ron.

In fact, Ron went out and dragged Chuck Dixon and Tony Bedard into the mess.

Within days, Ron and I were orchestrating what could only be described as controlled chaos. There were planning troubles, logistical nightmares, scheduling issues, unforeseen delays and even two artists who had to back out half way through.

There were times we wanted to scream, times we wanted to cry, times we wanted to run far, far away and times we wished we'd never had that fateful conversation last year.

However, now that I've seen the finished product, it was worth every ounce of effort.

I'd dub this a labor of love, but in reality, it's more an undertaking of insanity, a fool's errand performed by some of the most talented people I've ever seen. The results of which I think are nothing less than magnificent.

Enjoy.

Mike Bullock

BEHIND THE MASK

The Phantom Is Known By Many Names
By Ed Rhoades

Lee Falk's earliest mention of the Phantom's ancestry in the newspaper strip introduced Christopher Standish. Once a cabin boy for Christopher Columbus, Standish was now grown up and the captain of his own merchant ship. His son became the first Phantom. However, in the Scandinavian Phantom comic books, not Lee's stories, Chris became the surname of Mr. Walker.

In Lee's tales, when in the disguise as the mysterious person who "walks the streets as an ordinary man" he was simply referred to as Mr. Walker with a footnote that Walker stood 'for the ghost who walks.' When telling the story of his youth, it became necessary for the young Phantom to have a name, and Kip Walker was used for the Sunday story in the 1940's. Lee disliked the name Kip, which I suspect was originally presented by Alfred Bester when he was ghosting for Lee during WWII. Also at this time the Columbia serial, The Phantom, used yet another name, Jeffrey Prescott, for the young Phantom-to-be.

Lee retold the 'Childhood of the Phantom' in another Sunday adventure fifteen years later adding improvements and changing a few elements of the story like having the Phantom return to the jungle because his father was dying rather than his mother. His retelling of the story included making the young Phantom's name Kit, a name that was used thereafter in the syndicated strips.

In the 1996 Paramount film, The Phantom, the hero returns to the states where he is remembered by his love interest Diana as Kit Walker. The film is based on the very first Phantom strip and features another character named Jimmy Wells. Initially, Lee planned to have Jimmy Wells be the Phantom's secret identity. However, as the story progressed Lee decided instead to make his hero a mysterious jungle legend. Unlike, Superman who is really Clark Kent, or Batman who is Bruce Wayne, The Phantom is The Phantom and Mr. Walker is his disguise. For the film, it was decided to treat the Kit Walker/Phantom duality like a more typical secret identity convention making it a departure from early newspaper stories.

Lee told me he initially intended to call his comic hero 'The Gray Ghost,' because there were already other Phantoms... Phantom of the Opera, The Phantom Detective. Then he decided there was room for one more Phantom.

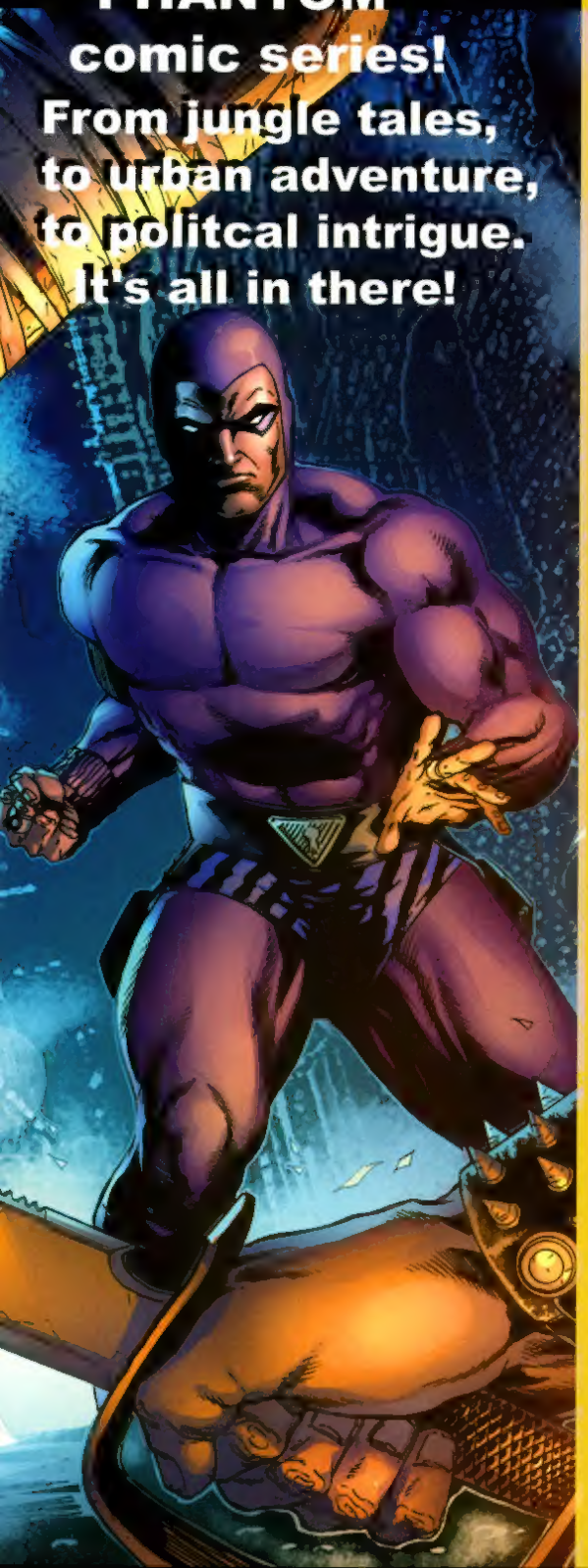
'The Ghost Who Walks' and 'The Man Who Cannot Die' were names given to The Phantom because his sons succeeded him giving the impression of immortality to evil doers. Another name, Guardian of the Eastern Dark, was introduced in a daily story as a flashback to the 9th Phantom who began a longstanding battle against evil, slavery and drugs in a troubled land.

Even the creator's name was surrounded in mystery. At Lee's memorial service, his son Conley mentioned that when he asked his father or his uncle why they chose the name Falk for their family name, he was told a new story each time. As recently revealed by Jim Shepherd, Lee was born Leon Gross.

Lee's statement "The Phantom is known by many names" can also be applied to the global popularity of The Ghost Who Walks. Although even this is not a complete list, it testifies to the ubiquitous quality of the character. He is called Iiwuson In Thailand, Fantome in Yugoslavia, Kizilmaske in Turkey, Fantasma in South America, Fantomen in Sweden, Fantomet in Norway and Denmark, Musta Naamio in Finland, Pahmon in Russia, L'Uomo Mascherato in Italy, El Hombre Enmascarado in Spain and Argentina, and although I don't have examples of these last two comics, I'm told he is Fantoom in Estonia and Phantomas in Israel.

Ride along with writer Mike Bullock on the speeding locomotive action packed on-going **PHANTOM** comic series!

From jungle tales, to urban adventure, to politcal intrigue. It's all in there!



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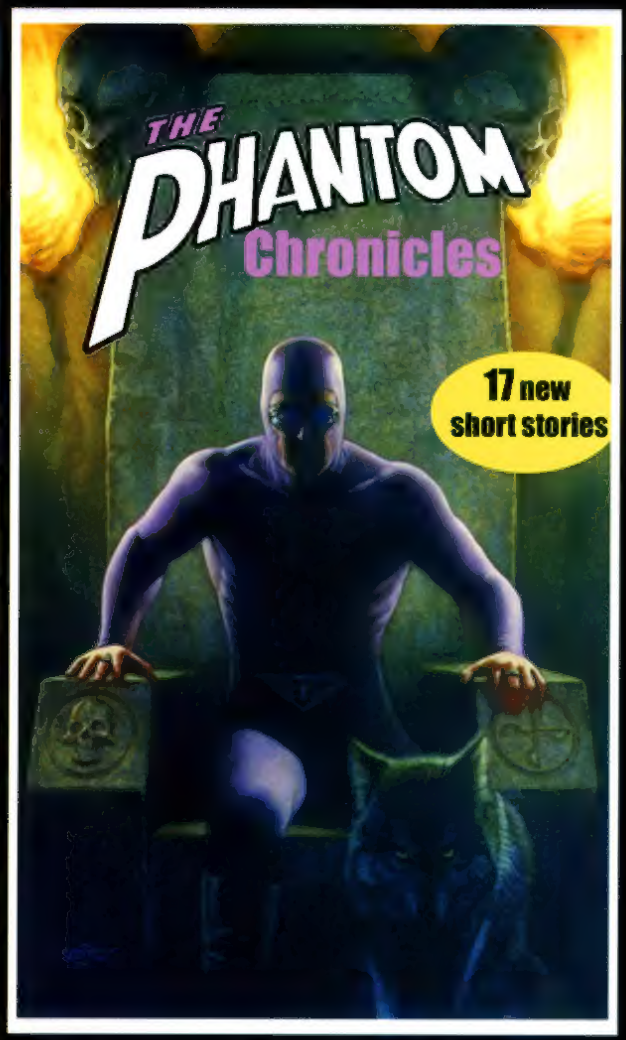

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